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# Is invasion plan designed to save hostages or Carter?

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*The Carter administration has denied columnist Jack Anderson's controversial claim of a new plan to rescue the 52 American hostages. Anderson's column appears daily in The News American. A series of reports on the alleged rescue plan will appear this week.*

A startling, top-secret plan to invade Iran with powerful military force has been prepared for President Carter. The ostensible purpose is to rescue the hostages, but the operation would also exact military retribution.

This would create a crisis on the eve of the election. Political studies show that support for the incumbent president has always soared dramatically during a national crisis.

The tentative invasion date has been set suspiciously for mid-October. Sources say the president has assessed the political consequences and has concluded the invasion would be popular with the electorate.

This raises a disturbing question about Carter's motive. The person he really wants to rescue, sources suspect, is himself. They believe he is willing to risk war to save himself from almost certain defeat in November.

My associate Dale Van Atta has been ferreting out the jigsaw pieces of the invasion plan, detail by detail, for three months. He has seen documents so secret that the code word used to classify them is itself classified.

I am now able to report how our armed forces plan to invade and hold portions of Iran. I know the code name of the operation. I can also reveal that a "cover plan" has been devised to disguise the true intent. As part of this cover plan, troops and supplies are already being mobilized in the Persian Gulf area, and "training exercises" have been initiated.

I don't intend to publish the code designations or other secret details. There is a danger that too many specifics could give the Soviets an insight into our methods. But I believe the American people are entitled to know that the president is ready to risk their fortunes, perhaps their lives, on a desperate political gamble.

Sources deeply involved in the planning fear Jimmy Carter's driving determination to get re-elected has distorted his judgment. Some feel this strongly; others admit it reluctantly. They describe the embattled Carter as extremely intense, coiled, relentlessly pushing toward his objectives.

In other words, his judgment about this dangerous venture is not shared by all the professionals who are helping him plan it. Nor has he consulted presidential rivals Ronald Reagan or John Anderson who might inherit the fruits of his aggression.

The invasion plan, of course, does not become operational until the president decides the military forces are ready and the weather is right. Up until 24 hours, even 12 hours, before D-Day, he can halt the assault. There are also alternate, contingency, fall-back plans, with minor or major variations, which he could invoke.

So the president can deny, at least technically, that he now plans to invade Iran. But he cannot truthfully deny that such a plan is in the works and that he has expressed the intention to go ahead with it. Van Atta has seen the documentation; he has spoken to several witnesses.

My decision to expose the president's secret scheme is influenced by the experience of *The New York Times* before the Bay of Pigs invasion. Details of that invasion plan leaked to the *Times*, which sat nervously on the story.

A week before the abortive April 1961 invasion, the *Times* published a few cautious details but withheld the heart of the story. During the immediate aftermath, a frustrated John F. Kennedy denounced the *Times* for publishing advance hints of the operation. "Every newspaper," he said, "now asks itself with respect to every story, 'Is it news?' All I suggest is that you add the question, 'Is it in the interest of national security?'"

But two weeks later, President Kennedy confessed to *New York Times* editor Turner Catledge: "Maybe if you had printed more about the operation, you would have saved us from a colossal mistake."

It is with this in mind that I have decided to reveal the general outlines of the October plan to invade Iran.

Here is the White House response in total:

"The suggestion that this or any other administration would start a war for political benefit is grotesque and totally irresponsible. The allegation made by Jack Anderson is absolutely false."

"With respect to the Persian Gulf, the president has said that we consider this region an area of vital interest. Therefore, while it is necessary to have plans for dealing with any external threats to countries of the region, we have no intention whatever of initiating any conflict ourselves, and neither the president nor any other responsible official has expressed any intention to take such an action either in October or at any other time."

"Erroneous and totally irresponsible reports such as the Anderson column increase the danger to the American hostages in Iran, impede efforts to obtain their release peacefully and jeopardize American interests in the area generally."

■ Jack Anderson is a syndicated investigative reporter.